

The Beeping at Night

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***. EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS- DAY

A leg in shorts with tiny blonde hairs pedaled the muted blue and rusty bike down the middle of the street. A kid, probably early teenager, rides his bike directly in the middle of the road. He's wearing a black band t-shirt stuck to his chest with sweat, a pair of khaki shorts, and beat-down converse all-stars. His mop of blonde hair flows majestically in the wind. This, is HUEY MONROE.

Huey has a small CD player that's clipped onto his waistline, with a pair of too large over the ear headphone on, the cord sneaking up his body like an anaconda. Inside the CD player the Self-Titled album by "Sublime" spins, Huey bops his head to the beat of the song as he rides, his backpack hopping along with Huey.

The suburban streets pass underneath Huey, the similarly colored houses becoming a blur of red brick. Huey reaches the end of the neighborhood and takes a right onto the major street.

1. EXT. STRIP MALL- DAY

Huey rides his bike up to a large and slightly rundown strip mall, with a grocery store on one end, and smaller local shops on the other end. Huey rides his bike up towards the grocery store, locking it to a light post before walking into the store.

2. INT. GROCERY STORE- DAY

Huey always loved the grocery store. He'd spend hours and hours wandering the aisles, reading different labels and re-organizing the shelves. He spent as long as he could in each aisle even though he knew exactly where the chicken stock he needed was.

After wandering every aisle possible, he finally walks over to where the chicken stock is kept. He pretends to be browsing different boxes, until the coast is clear in the aisle. In one smooth motion, he bent down to the bottom shelf and took off his backpack, giving him just enough time to slip the chicken stock in before standing back up. He checks right and left quickly, before making a b-line for the door.

3. EXT. STRIP MALL- DAY

Faint alarms can be heard from outside the building, as Huey comes barreling out of the entrance. He quickly grabs and unchains his bike, before pedaling as fast as his body can towards the other end of the shopping mall. He reaches the far side of the Strip mall from the Grocery store, directly next to Rodgers Records, an aptly named Record store. Huey leans his bike up against the building, and turns the corner to walk into the store.

4. INT. RODGERS RECORDS- DAY

Light sprays into the dusty record shop, each beam of light that hits one of the beads hanging up in the doorway shines a different color somewhere into the store. An arm reaches through and pushes a entrance for Huey, as he walks into the shop. The door shuts behind him, leaving Huey standing in the doorway for a moment, letting his eyes re-adjust.

Rodgers Records is a dark and musty record store, the blackout curtains over the windows prevent the outside world and light from coming inside. The ceilings are covered panel to panel in Tapestry and Christmas lights. To the right of the door a larger black man, with hair that's balding but still fighting, a plaid green t-shirt, and two small reading glasses sitting on a stool behind a wooden counter. This is CHUCK SIMMS, 50s, who lowers his days paper to look at Huey.

CHUCK
(with a fake customer
service voice)
Mornin sir, how may we help you
today?

Huey doesn't answer right away, instead surveys the room more. To the left of the door, is a small nook with an oversized red beanbag sitting on an oriental rug, with a wooden nightstand next to it, a green lava lamp and record player sit on the nightstand. There are 4 different rows of CDs, three that are the same size, and a fourth that shares the same wall as Chuck's counter. Huey looks back at Chuck, who sitting and studying Huey.

HUEY
(Timidly)
I'm just looking for some CDs.

CHUCK
Okay kid. Let me know if I can
help you with anything.

Chuck brings the newspaper back up to his face, as Huey saunters through the rows and rows of CDs, occasionally picking one up. He's not staying in any genre, just bouncing all over the place. Chuck has lowered his newspaper slightly, enough so he can watch Huey. He's stopped in front of one artists CDs, holding two different CDs in his hands. Chuck can see Huey doing this, however Huey doesn't know he can see him.

Huey sets his backpack on the ground, and sets one of the two CDs back down on the row. He bends down to slip the other CD into his backpack, and pops back up after a moment, backpack back on. He grabs the CD from the shelf, and walks towards the counter. Huey sets the CD "Aquemini" by Outkast on the counter. Chuck, is looking at Huey suspiciously, yet Huey doesn't notice.

CHUCK

This be all for ya kid?

Huey nods his head, not making eye contact with Chuck. Chuck rings the CD up at his register, and turns back to Huey

CHUCK

Okay, your total today is \$6.99.
You sure I can't get anything else
for you today kid?

Huey shakes his head, while staring at the ground. He holds out a 20 dollar bill from his pocket, reaching his right arm forwards to attempt to hand this to Chuck.

CHUCK

You sure you don't want to pay for
that CD in your backpack?

Huey's face goes white. He slowly raises his head, finally looking Chuck in the face. Chuck just shakes his head.

CHUCK

Give me the CD kid.

Huey pulls "ATLiens" out from his bag, and hands it to Chuck across the counter. His head goes down towards the floor again.

CHUCK

Son, you realize you have enough
for both these CDs with your
twenty, right?

Huey shakes his head no in disagreement.

HUEY

(Mutters)

My dad asked for change. He told me I can't spend his money.

Chuck sits back on his stool and rubs his eyes.

CHUCK

So you thought stealing from a stranger was a better idea?

Huey doesn't respond right away, waits to try to think of the right words.

HUEY

I just wanted to listen to it. I'm sorry.

Chuck sits on his stool with both albums in his hands, thinking. After a moment, he sets both on the counter.

CHUCK

Okay kid, here's the deal. Seein as it's summer for y'all, I have a deal for you. I'll give you these two for the price of one.

Huey breaks into a smile.

CHUCK

(Continued)

However, there's a catch. If you come here once a week and help me re-organize the shelves and clean the store, I'll never charge you for a CD to listen to, you can listen to them here in store. Deal?

Chuck holds his right arm out, and looks directly at Huey, who ponders this proposition for a moment. He then reaches his right arm out and shakes Chucks hand. They shake. Huey then hands Chuck the 20 dollars, and is given back his change and two CDs. Huey puts both CDs and the change into his backpack, before heading for the door. Before he opens it, Chuck calls out to him.

CHUCK

Before you go kid, what's your name? I figure kid isn't the best nickname for ya.

HUEY

I'm Huey. You're Rodger, right?

Chuck laughs at this question for some reason.

CHUCK

Nah Huey, I'm not Rodger. The names Charles Simms, but call me Chuck.

Huey turns back around and walks out the door, not looking back Chucks way. Chuck just smiles, picks his newspaper back up, and begins to read.

5. EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS- LATE AFTERNOON.

The sun has started setting as Huey speeds his way through the all-too similar neighborhood. Huey is riding faster now than earlier, the sounds of Outkast blasting through his headphones energizes him as he pedals. He's not stopping anywhere in the suburban neighborhood, just keeps riding past the red-brick houses.

Huey rides up to his driveway, stops to get the mail, before riding down the dirt road towards his home. He lives in a small and rundown trailer, with a screen door that's only left on for decorations, not for functional uses. The once pristine white of the outside of the trailer is replaced with a dying brown color. Huey rides his bike up to side of the trailer, leans the bike against the side of it, and heads towards the front door.

6. INT. MONROE TRAILER- NIGHT

The front door opens into the living room of the 3-bedroom trailer. The living room has couch facing away from the door and towards the TV, along with a Lazy-boy chair to the right with a middle-aged man sitting reclined in it. He has a race playing in the background, some sort of mixed drink in his hand. This is LARRY MONROE, late 40s. Two electric guitars and an acoustic hang on the wall next to a platinum plaque with the name "Larry Monroe," etched in gold with the title "Producer," directly above a Keyboard with cobwebs developing on them.

Huey walks into the living room, and straight into the kitchen to the right. He pulls the box of chicken stock out of his bag and sets it on the counter, next to the change.

HUEY

(In his Dad's direction)
I left your change by the Chicken stock in here.

Huey turns around and reaches into the fridge behind him, pulling out a clementine.

LARRY
(Off Screen and gruff)
There's dinner in the micro for
you.

HUEY
Thanks.

LARRY
Grab me a beer, would ya?

Huey shuts the refrigerator, bottle of beer in one hand and clementine in the other. He walks over and hands his father the beer, before walking down the hallway towards the three rooms. There are two on one side of the room, and a solo room across the hall. Huey approaches the first door on his right, stands directly center in the doorway, pauses for a second to catch his breath, and knocks.

VOICE OFF SCREEN
(Faintly)
Come in.

7. INT. MOM'S ROOM- NIGHT

Huey slowly creeps the door open before walking in. In the middle of the room is an older hospital bed, that's directly across from a small mounted TV on the opposite side wall. To the right of the bed is a nightstand with a lamp, water cup, and a whole slew of different pill bottles. To the left of the bed is a machine that looks like a prop from a 70s Science fiction movie, that makes a constant beeping noise every few seconds. The sound of the nightly news and the beeping is all that can be heard.

Sitting directly in the middle of the bed, leaning up against a mound of different pillows, is Huey's Mom. She has an IV hooked up to her right arm, the bright lights from the lamp reflects perfectly off her bald head. Huey walks closer to the bed. His Mom sits up in the bed slowly and weakly, her face breaking into a soft smile.

HUEY
Hey,

Huey holds out the clementine in his hands, making a peeling motion towards his mother.

HUEY
You hungry?

Huey's mom scoots slightly over in her bed, letting Huey sit on the edge of the bed.

MOM

Thank you honey. How'd your day go? I watched so many episodes of brady bunch, you'll never guess what Marcia did to Greg.

Huey's mom describes the episode of Brady Brunch she watches while Huey sits there silently, peeling her clementine.

HUEY

My day was fine, I got a part time job at a record store.

Huey can hardly look at his mother in the eyes.

MOM

I'm happy for you sweetie

Huey's mom breaks into a coughing fit after muttering her last sentence. Huey sits there silently while laser focusing in on the clementine. He finished peeling it while she's still coughing, the sounds bouncing off the walls like a racquetball.

Once she stops coughing Huey lays his head down into his mother's shoulder, feeding her pieces of her Clementine while the two watch a re-run of The Big Bang Theory.

After an episode or so Huey's mom was fast asleep. He stands up from her bed, turns the nightstand lamp out, turns the Tv's volume down, and quietly walks out of the room.

8. INT. HUEY'S ROOM- NIGHT

The walls of Huey's room are barren, the twin sized bed in the corner of the room brings the only bit of color to the room. He has a large bookshelf in his room, each shelf full of different books, CDs, Vinyl's, and other knick-knacks Huey seemed to love.

The beeping noises at night are the worst part. Huey's room is directly next to his mothers, so the sounds of her machines and her in pain fill in the sounds of silence coming from the rest of the house. Huey lays on his bed, facing the ceiling. He has his headphone on, his CD player resting on the bed next to him. The quiet sounds of Outkast are heard through the headphones, as Huey focuses in on those noises, not the ones coming from his house.

9. INT. SUBURBAN STREETS- DAY

Huey speeds his way down the street, pedaling like he's running away from a natural disaster.

10. INT. RODGERS RECORDS- DAY

The door swings back open, letting light back into the record store. Chuck covers the light with his hands, lowering them to see Huey standing in the doorway. Huey doesn't waste any time, walking straight for the rows of CDs. He riffles around in the Jazz Section, before walking over to the counter, CD in hand. He sets it up on the counter, as Chuck looks down at the CD. It's a CD with the greatest hits of Charlie Parker. Chuck looks back up to Huey, who's made his way to the beanbag chair across from the counter.

HUEY

You said yesterday I could listen
to whatever I wanted for free, as
long as it's here, right?

Chuck folds his newspaper up, before leaning forward towards Huey.

CHUCK

Charlie Parker huh?

Chuck grabs the disc out of its case and slides it into the 6 CD changer he has hooked up to the speaker system in the store. The smooth sounds of Charlie Parker and his Alto Sax spill into the store, as both guys sit back and listen.

CUT TO:

11. MONTAGE. RODGERS RECORDS- DAY

Montage shots of Huey helping re arrange and alphabetize the rows and rows of CDs. Chuck doesn't leave from behind the counter, instead he instructs Huey to clean more in this area, or re arrange that shelf. The door to the store is shown opening and closing multiple times, each time it moves the background changes from being light to dark outside.

12. INT. RODGERS RECORDS- LATE AFTERNOON

The sun has begun to set, the rows of CDs all look more aligned and organized, as the two sits across from each other again, listening to the stylings of Yo-Yo Ma. Huey has collapsed into the beanbag chair, Chuck is sitting on his usual stool, doing a crossword. As the song they listen to ends, Huey opens his eyes and looks at Chuck.

HUEY

What happened to Rodger?

Upon hearing this, Chuck sets his pencil and newspaper down, looking directly at Huey.

CHUCK

(With a deep breath)

Well, he died. Had prostate cancer, once the family found out he was already gone by that point.

The next song starts up, but Chuck lowers the volume on the receiver.

CHUCK

What about your folks? They must wonder where you go most days, right?

Huey doesn't answer, just stares at the beaded doorway. Chuck stands up from the stool behind the counter, and wonders his way over towards Huey. He slowly lowers himself onto the beanbag chair, and turns to Huey, who's looking the opposite way.

CHUCK

Why do you want to know what happened to my Daddy?

HUEY

(Without facing him,
voice starting to crack)

Whe..when did he, you know,
leave?

Chuck sits back in the beanbag.

CHUCK

It's two years next March. Listen kid, I like you and think you've got a great work ethic and music choice, but this isn't really something you casually talk to people about, you know?

Huey finally turns to face Chuck, his body slightly shaking.

HUEY

I have this friend, you know,
who's Mom is really sick. Like
really sick. She's been sick for
as long as I can remember knowing
them.

Huey takes a breath and continues with his story.

HUEY

He's getting tired of her being
sick, just wants her to feel
better, you know? But he doesn't
know what to do, or if there's
anything he can do. He's really
scared.

Huey couldn't make it through the last sentence, the tears
that have built up are finally released. Chuck holds his
arm out, as Huey buries himself into his shoulder and
cries. The two just sit there, as Huey cries and cries.

Huey starts calming down after a few seconds of hard
crying, besides from the sound of the occasional snuffle.

CHUCK

Well, Huey, I'd tell your friend
that there isn't anything he can
do about this sort of thing,
besides from being strong. He's
going through something that most
grownups have trouble with
handling. If that isn't someone
strong, I don't know what that
words means anymore. Does your
friend know what's wrong with his
mother?

Huey nods his head, the only words he's barely able to
fight out between the tears is the word "Bald," Chuck sighs
after hearing that word.

CHUCK

I see. Has your friend talked to
his father about this sort of
thing?

Huey shakes his head no.

CHUCK

Do you know why?

HUEY

He used to never be home, now he never leaves home. It's hard to talk to him.

Chuck pulls Huey into a harder hug as the tears start back up. Chuck whispers the phrase "Everything will be okay" over and over as Huey cries into his shoulder.

CHUCK

Listen son, I know this whole thing seems unfair. And honestly, it kinda is. You can't control what happens to you in this life. But, you can control how you react to this. Always know that you're so much stronger than you realize, and ultimately your Mom will be happier if you're a successful and happy person after she leaves.

Huey has exhausted every tear he has. He sits up on the beanbag and faces Chuck.

HUEY

How do you get rid of the beeping at night?

CHUCK

You never do. You just learn to sleep with it.

13. EXT. SCHOOL- AFTERNOON

The bell rings, as all the students come sprinting out of the building. There's a steady stream of them, as we slowly make our way to the bike rack. The same blue and rusted bike sits chained up against the rack. Huey reaches from off screen to unlock the bike, backing it up from the rack.

His hair is much shorter, his band T-shirt and Khaki shorts replaced with a pair of jeans and a plain grey hoodie. The leaves have already either fallen, or are about to fall. Huey hops on his bike, and rides off from the school.

14. EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS- AFTERNOON.

Huey pedals in the middle of the street, his CD player clipped to his belt buckle. He speeds down the road, a look of determination rests on his face. He knew he only has so long until his curfew calls him home. Huey rides up the Strip mall, and makes a b-line for Rodgers Records.

15. INT. RODGERS RECORDS- AFTERNOON

The beads move out of the way, as Huey creates a walkway for himself. He wanders into the record store and heads directly back into the rows of CDs.

HUEY
Hey Chuck, did you get in that new
Black Keys album yet?

Chuck doesn't respond to Huey. Huey looks up from the row after Chuck doesn't answer. Chuck is standing at the end of the row of CDs, like he's a predator trying to corner in his food.

HUEY
Wha.. What's going on? Did you
beat your crossword early today?

Chuck doesn't say anything, just slowly takes a step or two closer to Huey.

CHUCK
(softly)
I'm really sorry son.

Huey just stands there staring at Chuck, trying to process what he's saying.

CHUCK
Your father called today. I think
you should go home soon.

Huey doesn't move right away, but after a moment he takes off sprinting towards the door.

16. EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS- NIGHT

The sun is setting behind Huey as he pedales faster than he's ever gone down the road. The colors of the brick houses look much more vibrant, thanks to the tears streaming down Huey's face.

17. EXT. MONROE TRAILER- NIGHT

Huey rides his bike down the dirt road, the red and blue lights at the end of the road is the only thing in focus. He throws his backpack off, jumps off the bike, and runs into the house before either settles on the ground.

Huey's father meets him in the doorway, as Huey runs head-first into his chest. He looks up at his dad, who's got tears in his eyes. They stand in the doorway, hugging, and crying together.

18. INT. CHURCH RECREATION ROOM- DAY

The white plastic tables and white plastic chairs filled the rec room of the local Baptist Church. One of the tables is piled high with all different sorts of casseroles, as people are scattered around the gym, quietly eating and conversating. In front of the room has a large framed photo of Huey's mother, this time with a wig on, smiling as if nothing was wrong. Flowers line the frame, as people walk up to the picture at different times.

Huey sits by himself, at the end of one of the tables. A cold plate of Mac and Cheese and chicken sits on the table in front of him. He's not looking at anyone there, only talking to the people that talk to him, which seemingly goes on forever. He tries his best to smile and acknowledge the different stories about his mother that people he doesn't know tell him.

Huey rests his head against the table, just wanting the day to be over. He's talked to more people than he can remeber

CHUCK
(Off Screen)
How ya holdin up kid?

Huey sits back up, and turns to see Chuck standing there in a black suit, a plate of food in his hands. Huey doesn't say anything to this question.

CHUCK
Mind if I sit?

Huey shakes his head no and Chuck takes the seat next to him.

CHUCK
You excited for California? Or
rather, you excited to go back?

HUEY
(Hushed)
I guess.

Chuck begins to eat, not wanting to push Huey too far today.

CHUCK
I was talkin to your Daddy, told
him about the help you gave me
this year. He seemed very proud of
you Huey.

Huey doesn't respond, just continues to stare at the floor.

CHUCK
I got you something, kid.

This gets Huey's attention. Chuck sets his fork down and reaches into his suit jacket, pulling out a small cardboard rectangle that's wrapped with the crossword puzzles of older newspapers. He moves the box towards Huey, setting it down on the table by his food. Huey looks at it on the table for a moment, then looks back at Chuck.

CHUCK
(Gesturing)
Go ahead kid, open her up!

Without pause, Huey grabs the rectangle and begins slowly peeling the comics off the box.

CHUCK
Kid you're fine to rip that paper,
its old newspaper not a hundred.

Huey rips the paper off the box and opens the box by sliding the lid off the bottom. He stares at what's inside the box for a moment, before pulling it out.

HUEY
Is this?

CHUCK
That's right. I got sick of seeing
your CD player and figured I'd
help you join the modern-day.

Huey pulls out a black MP3 player that has a pair of black in-ear headphones wrapped around the player.

CHUCK
That's filed with around 2,500 of
my favorite albums and songs. I
want you to have it, to help you
never forget this place while also
helping you move on.

Huey has no words for Chuck. He's sitting there, just starting at the Mp3 Player. After a moment, he reaches forward and hugs chuck, taking him off guard.

HUEY
(muffled)
Thank you.

The two spent the rest of the wake sitting down on the floor against the wall behind them. Each person had one of the headphones in their ear, as Huey leans his head up against Chuck's shoulder. The two just sit there, as they sit and listen to music together.

CUT TO: BLACK